

Character Class

Artificer, Magical Technologist

By Skip Williams



The artificer from the *Eberron Campaign Setting* represents an approach to magic that's a little different from spellcasting as presented in the *Player's Handbook*. To an artificer, magic is neither arcane nor divine but a force to be captured and infused into items. At the core, an artificer is a master of gadgets. That's just the beginning, however. Your artificer can be a cool-headed problem solver, an ascetic philosopher, a cunning explorer, a magical dilettante, or a combat magician. It all depends on what kind of character you want to play and what sort of magical gadgetry you collect and use.



Artificer Assets

An artificer can use almost any magic item and often can modify a magic item on the spot or create a temporary item as needed. An artificer has a few other tricks as well. Here's an overview of the artificer's powers.

- **Infusions:** Artificers don't cast spells. Instead, they wield infusions, which imbue magical power into items both mundane and magical. Though an infusion isn't a spell, it works just like a spell in game terms.

There's a limit to the number of infusions you can use each day, but you can use any infusion from the artificer class list (your level permitting) without preparing it ahead of time. Better yet, you can learn new infusions that aren't on the normal artificer class list just by studying the infusion and making a Spellcraft check (albeit a fairly difficult one). This allows you personalize your infusion list somewhat.

- **High Skill Points:** Artificers gain four skill points per level -- a respectable total. In addition, artificers usually have high Intelligence scores (because Intelligence governs their ability to use infusions), and a high Intelligence score boosts the number of skill points you have available.
- **Good Will Saves:** An artificer uses the best progression for Will saves (see Table 3-1 in the *Player's Handbook*). This helps the artificer resist most effects that attack or fool his mind or assault his spirit, such as charms, compulsions, illusions, fear, and even *inflict wounds* spells.
- **Fair Weapon Selection:** The artificer is proficient only with simple weaponry. Simple weapons aren't the most deadly available, but having access to the whole category gives you plenty of options should your magic fail you.
- **Fair Armor Selection:** The artificer is proficient with light and medium armor and shields (but not tower shields). Medium armor provides good protection (though not the best), but it's far better than what many spell wielders (especially arcane casters) generally can use. A shield always is handy for a few extra points of Armor Class.
- **Fair Attack Bonus:** An artificer's base attack bonus is +3 per four levels, which is second only to the more martial classes such as the fighter. If you decide to enter combat, you can do pretty well.
- **Item Creation:** Though not a spellcaster, an artificer has several abilities that allow him to create magic items of various kinds. An artificer can employ the Use Magic Device skill to emulate spell prerequisites an item might have (and nonspell prerequisites, too). An artificer gains the Scribe Scroll feat at 1st level and gains other item creation feats as he gains artificer levels: Brew Potion at 2nd level, Craft Wondrous Item at 3rd level, Craft Magic Arms and Armor at 5th level, Craft Wand at 7th level, Craft Rod at 9th level, Craft Staff at 12th level, and Forge Ring at 14th level.

At each artificer level, the character gains a small pool of points he can spend instead of experience points when making magic items (this class feature is called the craft reserve). Starting at 5th level, an artificer also can scavenge the experience points others have spent creating magic items and use them to create items of his own.

- **Artificer Knowledge:** Starting at 1st level, an artificer can make a special check (d20 + artificer level + Intelligence modifier) to determine whether a particular item has a magical aura.
- **Artisan Bonus:** Also starting at 1st level, an artificer gains a +2 bonus on any Use Magic Device check he makes to activate a magic item for which he has the corresponding item creation feat.
- **Disable Trap:** An artificer can use the Search skill to locate traps with Search DCs higher than 20 and can use the Disable Device skill to disarm magical traps.
- **Bonus Feats:** In addition to the item creation feats he gains, an artificer gains a bonus feat at 4th level and every four levels thereafter. These bonus feats must be chosen from the list in the artificer class description.
- **Craft Homunculus:** At 4th level, an artificer can create a homunculus. The artificer doesn't need the Craft Construct feat, but the artificer does have to emulate the spell prerequisites for crafting a homunculus with the Use Magic Device skill and must pay for the cost of construction as noted in the artificer class description. Whenever the artificer has the time and money, he can upgrade an existing homunculus, so long as he can pay for the upgrade and the homunculus's total hit dice don't exceed the artificer's hit dice - 2.
- **Metamagic Spell Trigger:** Starting at 6th level, an artificer can apply a metamagic feat he knows to a

spell effect from a spell trigger item he activates. Doing so drains extra charges from the item equal to the level increase that the metamagic feat normally imposes. If the spell trigger item does not have charges, this power does not work.

The artificer also must have the item creation feat corresponding to the item he is using (for example, craft wand to apply a metamagic feat to a spell effect from a wand).

- **Skill Mastery:** Beginning at 13th level, an artificer always can take 10 when making a Spellcraft or Use Magic Device check.

Artificer Weaknesses

There are a few drawbacks to being an artificer, and it pays to consider them when thinking about an artificer character.

- **Infusions:** You have access to the entire artificer infusion list, but don't get too excited. The list doesn't have much depth. The vast majority of infusions grant fairly minor powers to items you or another creature use (a few higher-level infusions create objects or barriers). Infusions also tend to have long casting times (one minute is a typical casting time), which means a battle probably will be over by the time you finish casting. At the same time, most infusions don't last all that long (10 minutes per caster level is a typical casting time). This means you must cast your infusions in advance, but not so far in advance that they expire before having an impact on play.
- **Item Dependence:** Infusions lack offensive punch, and they don't have much potential to affect your environment, either. If you want the kind of power and flexibility that true spellcasters have, you'll need to load up on magic items. Because you have no true spellcasting ability, however, you must rely on the Use Magic Device skill if you want to use spell completion and spell trigger items, which tend to be the most affordable. You can ease your burden somewhat by using your class abilities to make your own items, but doing that takes time and money (and experience points once your pool of class reserve points is gone).
- **Poor Reflex and Fortitude saves:** Artificers have the worst progression for Reflex and Will saves (see Table 3-1 in the *Player's Handbook*). Artificers aren't so great at avoiding attacks on their bodies.

Playing a Classy Artificer

An artificer isn't the easiest character to play, especially when you're accustomed to more traditional characters. Great artificers have a few things in common, and you can use the same tricks to make your artificer memorable:

Stay on Top of Things

Your infusions are your most potent class abilities, but using them well requires careful timing (as noted earlier). To cast infusions at the right time, you must remain aware of what your party is doing. Try to anticipate what might happen next. Get your party in the habit of laying plans before any important undertaking. Even if your group can't come up with an effective plan, you can use the time to cast a few infusions.

Plan Ahead

Don't be fooled by your ability to cast infusions pretty much whenever you like. As we have already seen, you must time your infusion casting carefully. Because your infusions primarily serve to magically enhance items you

or another character uses, it pays to plan ahead. Try to become familiar with all the gear your party carries and decide ahead of time which of your allies can benefit the most from the infusions you have available. You need not follow your plan to the letter each time you go adventuring, but having a plan will help you get the most from your infusions. It also will help convince your party to hold themselves to a pace that allows you put your infusions into play.

Take Some Time Off

Your class abilities give you an unmatched ability to create magic items. To take advantage of that ability, you must take time away from adventuring at least once in a while. Some items (such as potions and scrolls that hold low-level spells) don't require much time or equipment to make, and you can construct them when your party rests or embarks on a journey aboard a conveyance (such as a House Lyrandar Airship --see pages 124-125 in the *Eberron Campaign Setting*).

When you're tackling a more powerful item with a creation time of more than a few days, you'll probably need a supply of weighty materials and a few tools, or at least a heat source (see Chapter 7 in the *Dungeon Master's Guide*). You'll also need a safe and secure place to create the item (an enemy breaking into your workshop while you're crafting will really ruin your day). You might find a friendly NPC to provide you with facilities, or perhaps you and your allies can chip in and purchase a dwelling or pay rent for a suitable space.

When considering time off to make items, don't forget your ability to create and improve a homunculus. Even a basic homunculus with a mere hit die is a handy servant, spy, and (in a pinch) fighting ally. Because a homunculus is a construct, it can benefit from infusions such as *repair damage*, *toughen construct*, or *stone construct*. Creating a homunculus isn't without its dangers. If your homunculus is destroyed, you take 2d10 points of damage. If you use your homunculus judiciously, however, it needn't be a threat to your survival.

Diversify

If you build up your Use Magic Device skill, you can employ almost any kind of magic item. Try to build a collection that allows you to deal with as many different situations as possible. At the minimum, you'll need a few items that can deal damage to foes, preferably in several different ways just in case a foe turns out to be resistant or immune to your favorite attack. Some items that improve your defenses or provide abilities that aren't combat oriented are a good idea as well.

Remember Your Friends

You can have a big impact on play by using your infusions to work through others, so be prepared to lend your support where it's needed.

The Party's Front Line: Your party's armored types (particularly fighters and paladins) can benefit from enhancements to their weapons and armor from your infusions. These characters also carry the fight to the enemy and serve to keep dangerous foes away from vulnerable party members -- such as you. It pays to keep these characters happy. If you have a collection of items that produce damaging effects (especially area effects), be careful how you aim them. You don't want to damage your allies with friendly fire.

If any of your fighting allies are constructs (such as warforged characters from the *Eberron Campaign Setting*), they will look to you to repair the damage they suffer. Don't be stingy with your *repair damage* infusions.

Party Scouts: Mobile and stealthy characters such as rangers, rogues, and monks can give you an idea of what lies ahead, and that's invaluable for deciding when to cast your infusions. Be ready to deal with what they uncover. Scouts excel at finding trouble and often need support or rescue in a hurry, so pay attention to what they're doing. If you have a homunculus, sending it along with the party's scouts is a great way to keep tabs on what they're doing.

Arcane Spellcasters: A wizard, sorcerer, or bard in your group probably has a wider array of effects available for attacking foes and handling utilitarian tasks (such as transport) than you have. Don't accept a subordinate status to these characters, however. Learn what spells these characters have available and look for ways to put them to use in coordination with your infusions. Also keep in mind that you probably have more hit points and a better attack bonus and Armor Class than most of these characters. Be ready to intervene when foes threaten your group's arcane spellcasters with physical attacks.

Divine Spellcasters: A cleric or druid in your group often will use spells to work through allies. It's even more important to coordinate your infusions with a divine spellcaster than it is with an arcane spellcaster. One approach that works well is to take responsibility for defensive magic yourself. This frees the divine spellcaster to concentrate on offensive and utilitarian spells.

Some Key Equipment

As an artificer, you're all about your gear, so it pays to select it carefully. Here are the basics:

- **Armor and Shield:** You'll get into a fight -- either by accident or design -- sooner or later. Obtain the best medium armor you can afford to get the best protection available. Plan to carry a heavy shield unless you use a two-handed weapon. Don't overlook defensive items such as *rings of protection* and *amulets of natural armor*. Keep in mind that several lesser items that stack together give you better protection, and at a cheaper price, than one big item. Also keep in mind that you can use infusions on your own gear to give your armor and shield special powers, and not necessarily defensive powers. For example, the 1st-level armor enhancement infusion can imbue your shield with the blinding power, which is useful for disorienting foes. ||||
- **Melee Weapon:** Your infusions aren't much good for attacking foes, and you have the Armor Class and base attack bonus to do fairly well in battle, so long as your hit points last. You're proficient only with simple weapons. If you use a shield, consider a heavy mace or morningstar—these weapons deal good damage. If you don't use a shield, you might as well use a two-handed weapon. Spears and longspears don't deal any more damage than a heavy mace or morningstar, but spears have a better critical rating. A shortspear can be thrown, and a longspear has reach. Either kind of spear is useful for probing surfaces for unseen dangers.
- **Ranged Weapon:** A sling is a cheap weapon (in fact, it has no cost at all, you can turn any scrap or cloth or leather into a sling). A crossbow, however, has better range and deals more damage. You can use either a heavy or a light crossbow. The former deals more damage but takes longer to reload.
- **Diversified Magic:** We've already discussed the value of collecting (or making) a variety of magic items. Scrolls are cheap and you can start making your own at 1st level. A collection of low-level spells on scrolls is useful throughout your career. Magic missile is tough to beat as an attack spell, but also consider spells such as *sleep* and *color spray* especially at the beginning of your career. As you advance in level (and your Use Magic Device skill improves), consider higher level attack spells for your scrolls. You can make your own wands when you reach 7th level, and you can afford one or two (filled with low-level spells) before that. Spells you'll use often, such as *magic missile*, work best in wands.

Your collection of scrolls also should include spells that improve your mobility or give you special powers. Consider spells such as *jump*, *expeditious retreat*, *see invisibility*, *detect thoughts*, *levitate*, and *fly*. Also consider spells that you can use in several different ways, such as *polymorph*, the shadow evocation and shadow conjuration spells, *telekinesis*, *stone to flesh*, and *disintegrate*.

About the Author

Skip Williams keeps busy with freelance projects for several different game companies and was the Sage of *Dragon Magazine* for many years. Skip is a co-designer of the **D&D** 3rd Edition game and the chief architect of the *Monster Manual*. When not devising swift and cruel deaths for player characters, Skip putters in his kitchen or garden (rabbits and deer are not Skip's friends) or works on repairing and improving the century-old farmhouse that he shares with his wife, Penny, and a growing menagerie of pets.

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